

C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

In Section (II)(b)(2) (State Goals) the Council's strategic vision and goals are described. Each goal includes strategies specific strategies to strengthen the State's workforce system.

Additionally, the Economic and Activities analyses conducted in Section (II)(a)(1) of this plan also identified four areas of focus that are priorities for the WIOA Combined State Plan:

- Improving public awareness of and access to the workforce system.
- Coordinating business services across partners to ensure delivery of streamlined and high-quality solutions.
- Serving rural and remote communities.
- Career pathways/Sector partnerships.

With these priorities in mind, Idaho has identified a variety of strategies, which are outlined in the following sections as per the State Plan Information Collection Request.

1. Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

Idaho continues to refine its sector strategies to meet the needs of the individuals who face barriers to employment in an economic climate where unemployment rates are near 3% statewide. While the COVID-19 pandemic had significant impact on our economy, Idaho was the first state to regain pre-pandemic employment levels in October 2020. Our economic analysis revealed that much of Idaho's current job demand and job growth are in health care, retail trade, manufacturing, accommodation & food service, construction, and professional, scientific & technical services. While jobs in retail trade and accommodation & food service lean towards lower wages, they play an important role in the development of workplace skills for Idahoans with the highest barriers to employment. In addition, these two industries are important in our rural communities where options for full-time, year-round jobs with benefits are few. Providing career pathways into the

higher skilled jobs in these industries, or leveraging entry-level employment in these industries to develop workplace skills, are necessary for Idaho's sector strategies and career pathways. Additionally, jobs in education are increasingly appearing on state and regional "in-demand" occupation lists signifying the need to invest in strategies that grow the talent needed to train the workforce of the future.

Sector Strategies

The Idaho Workforce Development Council, in partnership with the Idaho Association of Commerce & Industry, launched the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Talent Pipeline Management Initiative (TPM) in 2020. State workforce development training funds were awarded to train an initial cohort of 30 individuals in the methodology. These individuals are now working with local industry cohorts and education providers (K-career) to align the talent pipeline through the following steps:

1. Organize Employer Collaboratives
2. Engage in Demand Planning
3. Communicate Competency and Credential Requirements
4. Analyze Talent Flows
5. Build Talent Supply Chains
6. Continuous Improvement

Initial collaboratives include construction, healthcare, natural resources, food processing and welding. Discussions of the Council have evolved from focusing on specific industries, to in-demand occupations, to the specific skills needed for multiple occupations. The Council continues to use data-informed decision making to refine its investment priorities – from eligible training providers to award of state workforce training resources.

Career Pathways

Through the State's work-based learning initiative, Idaho LEADER (Learn.Do.Earn), all of the core partners, along with the State Board of Education, State Department of Education, Department of Commerce, Department of Health & Welfare, STEM Action Center, Department of Corrections, Department of Juvenile Corrections, and Idaho Public Television are working to increase the line of sight between our youth, transitioning adults and career opportunities. The group has adopted a work-based learning continuum that categorizes opportunities for employers to engage with education and the workforce system under Learning About Work, Learning Through Work, and Learning At Work.

Scaling apprenticeship is a high priority under LEADER and the investments made through the State Apprenticeship Expansion and American Apprenticeship Initiative grants in *Apprenticeship Idaho* have moved the state forward significantly. In early PY20, USDOL announced a Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grant award to the Idaho Workforce Development Council that has provided resources via a public-private partnership with Idaho Business for Education. With this award, it became imperative to connect IDOL's apprenticeship grants, the WDC's YARG grant and the State Board of Education's Closing the Skills Gap grant through the Idaho Apprenticeship

Coalition to ensure that employers and apprentices experience a seamless approach to services. Most recently, IDOL was awarded another SAE grant which included funding for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Corrections to hire individuals focused on expanding apprenticeship.

The LEADER group continues to work on the following priorities over the next 12-18 months in support of career pathways:

- Develop a list of high-quality degree and non-degree credentials. Processes used by Education Strategy Group, Texas CTE and Ohio's TechCred programs are informing our approach.
- Launch a more robust Next Steps website to include college and career information for high school students, transitioning adults and influencers (i.e. parents, teachers, counselors, one-stop partners, etc.)
- Develop career pathways specific to rural Idaho to be housed in the Next Steps website.

Idaho Career & Technical Education (which houses both Adult Education and Carl D. Perkins programs) continues to be the lead in researching and developing career pathways. ICTE oversees 700 secondary career-and-technical education programs in Idaho's high schools, and the technical colleges housed within Idaho's public higher education institutions. ICTE launched an initiative in 2016 to create statewide alignment between secondary and postsecondary CTE programs of study. In the past, each secondary program maintained an individual articulation agreement with one of Idaho's post-secondary institutions. This effort first aligns program learning outcomes across postsecondary institutions, and then aligns the secondary programs to those learning outcomes. Once the process is complete, a statewide articulation is put in place, allowing secondary students to articulate seamlessly into any Idaho institution that offers their program of study. Thus far, ICTE has aligned all 49 programs of study and is starting to refresh standards.

To support the statewide articulation framework, ICTE developed Idaho SkillStack - a micro certification/badging platform that communicates the competencies/skills Idaho high school and postsecondary students can demonstrate. The micro certifications/badges are stacked towards the award of postsecondary credit (i.e. once a student earns predefined badges, by demonstrating competency, they are eligible to convert the badges to credit), preparation for industry certifications and the common skills required by Idaho employers for job openings. These badges provide visual progress towards an individual's career goals. Over 50,000 badges have been awarded since the system was implemented.

Taking this effort to the next level, ICTE developed career ladders for the most in-demand jobs in Idaho (where secondary and post-secondary career and technical programs are also available). The career ladders begin with core transferrable skills that students are learning through their program. Students then move from the entry level positions up through the career pathway showing what skills need to be added to move to the next level and where an individual can learn those skills. Currently, career ladders are available for the following:

Skilled and Technical Sciences

- Advanced Manufacturing

- Engineering Drafters and Technicians
- Transportation Equipment Repair
- Installation, Maintenance and Repair

Health care

- Dentistry
- Therapeutic Services
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Health Informatics

Business and Marketing

- Administrative Services (showing Finance & Accounting, Human Resources & Administrative Support and Production and Manufacturing)
- Sales and Marketing (showing Marketing and Advertising, Licensed Sales and Retail/Specialty Sales)

Information and Technology

- IT Support and Administration
- IT Design and Development

These career ladders are integrated into the SkillStack and Next Steps websites to provide an interactive solution for students, parents, teachers, and counselors. The technology platform will allow the State to add additional pathways as they are mapped and to continuously update the data so that the tool stays relevant. The career ladders have their own website: <http://careeratlas.idaho.gov>.

2. Program Alignment and Addressing Gaps

This section addresses strategies in place to ensure alignment between core programs, Combined Plan partners, and One-Stop partners to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the State Plan vision and goals. It also describes strategies to strengthen the workforce development system in regard to the gaps identified in analysis in Section (II)(a).

Program Alignment

Many aspects of the WIOA core and partner programs in Idaho are already aligned as a result of being clustered within a few State agencies. For example, the Title I-B Youth, Wagner Peyser, Trade, Veterans, and Unemployment Insurance programs are housed with the Idaho Department of Labor and thus have a single intake and cross-enrollment process. To ensure ongoing alignment and to guide implementation of the Combined State Plan, the Workforce Development Council coordinates a One-Stop Committee and a WIOA Advisory Group. The One-Stop Committee consists of the senior leadership level of core programs, combined plan partners and additional entities

involved in Idaho's workforce development system. The One-Stop Committee is expected to develop policies for consideration by the Council, fulfill certain responsibilities of state and local workforce boards (i.e. AJC Certification), and ensure continuous improvement of the system. The WIOA Advisory Group takes a more hands-on role in drafting policies and plans as its members work more closely with the customers of the workforce system. The WIOA Advisory Group consists of:

- Staff from the Idaho Workforce Development Council.
- Staff from the Idaho Department of Labor to represent the service delivery roles of Title I-B Youth and Title III programs, as well as Combined State Plan programs administered by the Department.
- Staff from the Idaho Department of Labor to represent the administrative entity and fiscal agent.
- Staff from Adult Education to represent Title II programs.
- Staff from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to represent Title IV programs.
- Staff from the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to represent Title IV programs.
- Staff from the Idaho Commission on Aging to represent SCECP, a combined plan partner program.
- Program staff from other partner programs as necessary and appropriate.

This group ensures ongoing alignment between programs, coordinates statewide reporting, and will also serve (as appropriate) on the Data System Alignment working group identified in Section (III)(b)(6). The WIOA Advisory Group has been instrumental in supporting efforts to develop co-enrollment and eligible training provider performance data.

Many members of the WIOA Advisory Group also serve on the leadership team for Idaho's Workforce Data Quality Initiative which seeks to build upon the existing State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), managed by the Idaho Office of the State Board of Education (OSBE), to build a secure, web-based interface, which ties together individual program participant information from workforce, education, and unique program data sets. This interface will enable partners to 1) merge multiple data sets to fulfill WIOA joint performance reporting requirements; 2) link workforce and ETP data to strengthen workforce program data outcomes; and 3) enhance the ability to evaluate both workforce and education programs across the state, including laying the foundation to incorporate additional Idaho-based WIOA partner programs via automated, electronic means.

The Council also identified the following strategies that support program alignment and the goals of the Idaho's Combined State Plan:

- Improving Public Awareness and Access to the Workforce System – The sixteen public listening sessions conducted by the Council and partners show several gaps that allow various opportunities for system improvement. This includes actionable messaging of the services and benefits available to both jobseekers and employers. Also, increasing referrals and service coordination among programs will help to improve outcomes for those in need.

- Update: The One-Stop partners were invited to participate in the Data Labs: Roadmap to Recovery project hosted by Georgetown University and the National Governors Association. The kickoff meeting was held September 23 and 24, 2021. A consistent referral process, increased co-enrollment, and exploration of technology solutions are the focus.
- Coordinating Business Services across partners to ensure delivery of streamlined and high-quality solutions – As previously noted, statewide listening sessions brought to light that employers are seeking services and information in a coordinated and targeted fashion. Based on this feedback, the system must clearly identify the services each program has to offer, develop a coordinated approach to visit/serve employers, and utilize a continuous improvement approach to better serve employers. In addition, an information portal needs to be developed to include information on services available from WIOA and non-WIOA partners.
 - Update: USDOL provided Idaho with technical assistance in this area through Maher and Maher. Business Services training was held between April and May 2021, and approximately 80 individuals from partner agencies were able to participate. With the upcoming transition for the Adult and Dislocated Worker Service programs to Equus Workforce Solutions, the team has slowed deployment of the business outreach strategies until the new staff can be integrated in October 2021.
- Serving Rural and Remote Communities - In our activities analysis, nearly every core and partner program identified service to rural and remote areas as a significant challenge. Idaho is largely a rural state, so the importance of this priority cannot be understated. Some WIOA partners have modified service delivery strategies to better reach rural and remote Idahoans and the system is interested in evaluating the success of the model and expanding it as appropriate.
 - Update: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges in the remote service delivery model, requiring nearly all services to be implemented virtually. The partners are now taking stock of what worked well, and didn't work well, with virtual service delivery models and adapting. Remote offices have been restarted and the system is still very interested in evaluating the effectiveness.
- Career Pathways/Sector Partnerships - Our economic analysis revealed that many of Idaho's in-demand and high-growth occupations are in industries such as manufacturing, construction, health care, technology and tourism. The Council, in partnership with the State Board of Education and the state's Chamber of Commerce, is beginning to evaluate skills and certifications that are valued across industries to transform the delivery of workforce training and education.
 - Update – The Talent Pipeline Management initiative was also impacted by COVID-19. The in-person training that was scheduled over three, 2-day sessions had to be converted to virtual training and it was tough on the facilitators and participants. While the training was completed by December 2020, it's been a slow start to building the employer collaboratives.

Specific goals for implementation during this State Plan period are included in II(b)(2) and each partner's description of how they will implement the strategies follow in III(a)(2).

Addressing Gaps

In addition to implementing the state's strategies (described above and in II(b)(2)), the needs of specific populations were identified as areas of concern in the Workforce Analysis:

- Older workers
- Youth
- Veterans
- Formerly incarcerated individuals
- Individuals with disabilities

These populations are intertwined with all of the strategies, but additional efforts are described below.

- Older Workers - As noted in the economic and workforce analyses, Idaho's population and economy are expected to see continued growth and many of those moving to the state are over 65. The workforce participation rate of this group is just 16%, providing an opportunity for employers to leverage these individuals for unfilled jobs. However, employers may need to modify their work environments or address cultural issues to retain older workers. Idaho's workforce system can help by educating employers on the benefits of hiring older workers and the workplace practices that would be desirable to older workers.
- Youth - The economic and workforce analyses revealed that youth ages 16-24 in the workforce are more likely to be unemployed than other age groups. "*Youth ages 16-24 who are in the workforce*" includes all persons ages 16-24 who are actively employed or seeking employment. This is a broad group which includes, but is not limited to, specific populations with barriers to employment. This group also includes students who are engaged in secondary education (ages 16-21), and youth who are engaged in post-secondary education (through age 24), who are employed or seeking employment. Implementing and scaling a youth apprenticeship initiative in the state will support connecting these youth to careers before they leave high school. The initiative is envisioned to encompass both traditional and non-traditional apprenticeship opportunities. Some could have postsecondary components that lead to industry credentials, others could lead to a bachelors or advanced degree. In addition to the postsecondary credential, the initiative is designed to reduce youth unemployment.
- Veterans – Those who have served our country deserve additional support from the state's workforce system. Efforts are underway to build relationships and opportunities under the Department of Defense's SkillBridge program. In addition, the state's Division of Veteran Services has been a key partner in aligning with the *ApprenticeshipIdaho* initiative to ensure that Veterans can access their benefits when participating in a registered apprenticeship program. There are also initial efforts to attract separating service members to the state for

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unfilled jobs. Idaho is involved in a pilot with the Department of Defense to receive information from servicemembers who indicate they are relocating to Idaho before they separate. Finally, the State Board of Education has leveraged a Lumina Foundation grant to create a crosswalk between military training and college credit so that there is consistency statewide in how Veterans receive credit for prior learning when enrolling in the state's public postsecondary institutions.

- Formerly Incarcerated Individuals – Given Idaho's low unemployment rate, those individuals with a criminal background also offer an opportunity for unfilled jobs. The Idaho Department of Corrections applied for, and received, a grant from the Lumina Foundation to create better pathways for those who have a criminal background – starting behind the gate in providing postsecondary training programs that are aligned to in-demand occupations. The Workforce Development Council and Idaho Career & Technical Education are partners in the grant. In addition, WIOA Title IB Youth funds are allocated to support a position within the Idaho Department of Corrections to meet with youth, 18-24, who are being released to ensure they connect with career planners in the workforce system.
- Persons with Disabilities - Idaho's population of persons with disabilities is increasing at a rate faster than growth in the general populations. Idahoans with disabilities participated in the labor force at a rate of 48 percent, compared to 80 percent for people without disabilities, and the unemployment rate for Idahoans with disabilities was 12.2 percent, on average, compared to 3.3 percent for those without disabilities. Through the delivery of the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities, opportunities have been afforded to students in the areas of counseling on postsecondary education, instruction in self advocacy, job exploration counseling, work-based learning and work readiness. Both Title IV programs are working to expand work-based learning experience opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities who could benefit from this type of training opportunity. Business engagement services delivered throughout the state address the needs of local businesses in the areas of technical assistance and training specific to disability related accommodations for employees on the job and disability etiquette, connecting businesses with an untapped and diverse labor pool, and education on job modification and retention of employees. Agency staff are improving their use of regional labor market information and the various pathways to careers to better inform individuals with disabilities of the emerging high-demand, high growth industry sectors and occupations.

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